

Dateline DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

A Message from the Secretary

Dear DHMH Staff:

I want to thank you for your help and support during the past seven and one half years. As I look back over these years, it becomes clear that we have made significant improvements in the health status of Maryland's citizens. The five priorities we addressed during my tenure as Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services and later as Secretary have yielded the following results:



Improvements in Health Care Access

- Increases in health care access to ensure coverage for over 100,000 uninsured children through the *HealthChoice* program.
- Doubling the number of individuals who receive mental health services.
- Marked increases in the number of medical practitioners who provide services through the mental health system.
- Increases in the number of individuals who receive substance abuse treatment.
- Increases in the number of individuals with developmental disabilities who access community-based services through the waiting list initiative.

Improvements in Health Status

- Reductions in the death rate from AIDS and in the progression of individuals from HIV to AIDS.
- Reductions in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases.
- The lowest infant mortality rate in State history.
- Increases in childhood immunization rates.

Dr. Benjamin to Join APHA

DHMH Secretary Dr. Georges C. Benjamin will be leaving State service early this month to become executive director of the American Public Health Association (APHA).

Dr. Benjamin was appointed health secretary in May of 1999. He joined DHMH in 1995 as deputy secretary for Public Health Services.

APHA is the nation's oldest and largest organization of public health professionals and represents more than 50,000 members from over 50 public health occupations.

*Good luck, Dr. Benjamin.
We'll miss you!*

- Improvements in the State's capacity to respond to emerging infectious threats and bioterrorism.
- The implementation of the landmark Cigarette Restitution Fund Program, with reductions in the incidence of cancer in Maryland, increases in Maryland's research capacity and reduction in the use of tobacco products by our citizens.

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A Message from the Secretary *Continued*

Improving the Quality of Health Care and Support Services

- Significant improvements in the quality of care in nursing homes.
- Demonstrable improvement in the care received under the *HealthChoice* program.
- Increases in the number of nurses who practice in Maryland.
- Increases in the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Improving the Infrastructure of the Department

- Significant improvement in the operations of the State's Medicaid program.
- Reductions in the number of repeat audit errors.
- Improvements in the working conditions for departmental employees.

Improved Coordinating of Health Policy in the State

- Improved working relationships with members of the Maryland General Assembly.
- Better coordination of health policy initiatives with other state agencies.
- Increased collaboration with our private sector partners.

As you may know, I have been offered a unique, once in a

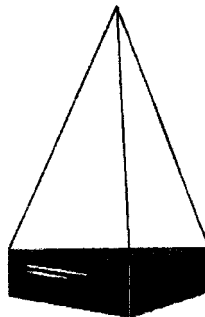
lifetime opportunity to direct the American Public Health Association (APHA). APHA is the largest and oldest public health association in the world and I have decided to accept their kind offer. Working with all of you has been both professionally exciting and personally fulfilling. I would not trade this experience for anything in the world.

Sincerely,



Georges C. Benjamin, M.D.
Secretary

DHMH wins Six Awards at Recognition Conference



DHMH carried away six of 12 Exceptional Employee Achievement Awards from the 2001 Governor's Annual Awards and Employee Recognition Training Conference held on November 26 at the Baltimore Convention Center. Four individuals and two teams were recognized.

Exceptional Employees Achievement Awards are given in each of the following job categories: Administrators, Office and Clerical Workers, Paraprofessionals, Professional — Supervisor, Professional — Worker, Public Safety and Security Workers, Service Maintenance Workers, Skilled/Craft Workers,

and Technicians. Team categories include Problem-Solving, Improvement, and Information Technology Innovative.

Individual awards were presented to **Floyd Bennett**, residential unit manager at RICA-Southern (Paraprofessionals); **Vervelverely Johnson**, coordinator of special programs at the Holly Center (Professionals - Supervisor); **Sandra Ropp Thompson**, director of staff education and development at the Western Maryland Hospital Center (Professionals - Worker); and **Wayne Fink**, a carpenter technician at Holly Center (Skilled Craft Workers).

Team awards were won by the Covered Walkway Project at the Deer's Head Hospital Center (Problem-Solving Team) and the Dazzling Delights of the Joseph D. Brandenburg Center (Improvement Team).

Covered Walkway Project team members include Tommy Anderson, Wade Bradford, Randy Beers, Cordy "Bleat" Hudson and Bruce Patterson. Members of the **Dazzling Delights** are Terri Guyer and Diana Wolford.

Michael G. Edukat

The deepest sympathies of the DHMH family are extended to the staff and family of Michael G. Edukat, director of the Rosewood Center. Mr. Edukat passed away suddenly of heart failure in his home on November 11, 2002.

Please Note . . .

Phone numbers for the main office of the Somerset County Health Department at 7920 Crisfield Highway in Westover have changed.

New numbers are:

Administration /

General Administration -
443-523-1700

Environmental Health -
443-523-1730

Community Health/Nursing
Program - 443-523-1740

Behavioral Health and
Addictions - 443-523-1780

Voice Mail Directory -
443-523-1720

Toll-Free Number -
1-800-363-8090

Fax numbers at the Westover
office remain unchanged.

Calendar of Events

Friday, December 6 — **Workshop: Elder Mistreatment: Identification, Assessment, and Intervention;** University of Maryland School of Nursing Baltimore; 8:30 a.m. — 4:15 p.m. \$120, approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information or visit the school's Web site at www.ssw.umaryland.edu/cpe for a full workshop description.

Wednesday, and Thursday, December 18 and December 19 —
Workshop: Making the Transition from Clinician to Manager in Human Services; University of Maryland School of Nursing Baltimore; 8:30 a.m. — 4:15 p.m. \$120, approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information or visit the school's Web site at www.ssw.umaryland.edu/cpe for a full workshop description.

Friday, January 24 — **Workshop: Boundaries and Dual Relationships in Social Work: Ethical and Risk-Management Issues;** University of Maryland School of Nursing Baltimore; 8:30 a.m. — 4:15 p.m. \$120, approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information or visit the school's Web site at www.ssw.umaryland.edu/cpe for a full workshop description.

Congratulations to . . .

Cynthia Shirk, who joins DHMH as deputy chief of staff to Debbie Chang, deputy secretary for Health Care Financing. Cynthia most recently has been an independent consultant on Medicaid issues for public and private organizations. Prior to that, she was the acting director of State Children's Health Insurance for the federal Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Stacey Davis, who joins DHMH as a special assistant to Deputy Secretary Chang. Previously, Stacey was a health care analyst in the quality solutions group for the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

Give Your Child the Gift of a Healthy Heart

More and more American children are overweight. Holiday eating and the tendency to be less active in the winter months can contribute to weight gain

for children, as well as adults. Children who are overweight are more likely to become overweight adults with chronic conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes. Overweight in children can also lead to stress, sadness, and low self-esteem.

You can help control this emerging public health problem in your own family by giving your children the gift of healthy habits for a healthy heart. When you help children build healthy habits early, they approach eating and activity with a positive attitude. Remind them that food is something to enjoy and helps them grow, and that being active is fun and energizing. Experts suggest at least 60 minutes of daily moderate physical activity for most children.

TV commercials can persuade kids to choose high-fat snacks and high-sugar drinks and cereals. Watching TV promotes inactivity. Help your child be aware of peer and media pressures to improve his or her ability to make healthy choices.



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Weight Gain

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Helping Your Child, a publication from the National Institutes of Health's Weight Control Information Network, contains many useful suggestions. For a copy, contact Peggy Yen in the Division of Cardiovascular and Nutritional Health at 410-767-6781 or visit www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/nutrit.htm and click on "Tips for Parents."

Editor's Note: Thanks to the staff in the Family Health Administration's Division of Cardiovascular Health and Nutrition for writing this article.

If You Don't Snooze, You Lose

If you find yourself nodding off at long afternoon meetings, boredom may not be the real reason. Your body is probably sending a message that you need more sleep. Experts say that if you feel drowsy during the day, even during boring activities, you haven't gotten enough rest.

As Americans become busier, they sleep less. A century ago, the average American slept about nine hours a night. But the common practice of "burning the candle at both ends" in western industrialized societies has created so much sleep deprivation that we think constant sleeplessness is normal. Today, most Americans feel lucky if they get six or seven hours a night.

Just how much is enough? The amount of sleep a person needs

varies with age. Infants need about 16 hours per day, while most adults need about eight hours for optimal health. Some people need as much as 10 or as little as five hours of sleep to feel refreshed. We need more sleep if we haven't gotten enough in previous days.

Scientists are still learning why our bodies need rest. Many of the body's cells show increased production and reduced breakdown of proteins during deep sleep. Since proteins are the building blocks for cell growth and for repair of damage from factors like stress and ultraviolet rays, there may be some truth to the saying, "I need my beauty sleep."

Sleep is essential for proper functioning of the nervous system. If we don't get enough, concentration, memory and coordination are impaired. Sleep deprivation can slow reflexes in much the same fashion as alcohol intoxication!

The results of sleep deprivation are frightening. Drowsy drivers cause about 100,000 accidents a year. Continued deprivation can result in hallucinations and mood swings. Tired people get grouchy, forget things and make bad decisions. Luckily, there are things you can do to help your body benefit from getting the sleep you need:

- Get enough exercise. Physical activity helps you sleep better — but be sure to do it at least two hours before bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine in the late after-

noon and evening.

- Create a relaxing routine at bedtime. Have a light snack, a warm bath, or listen to soft music.
- Keep the bedroom cool and dark. Over-heated bedrooms make for restless nights.
- See your doctor if you have chronic trouble sleeping or are consistently drowsy in the daytime.

For more information, log on to the National Sleep Foundation's Web site at www.sleepfoundation.org.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Tara Snyder, Community Health Educator in the Center of Health Promotion, Education and Tobacco Prevention, for writing this article.



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A publication of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Public Relations

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